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**Inventory for
Captain J. W. Thomson Papers
MS-335
Inclusive dates: 1872-1879**

by
Tracy Lamaestra
Assisted by intern Denise Fields
July 2012

Shelf feet: .25 linear feet
Number of boxes: 1

Accession 2000.32.1

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Abstract

Thomson, J. W. (Josiah Wesley), *Captain* (b. 1839-d. 1891)

Papers, 1872-1879

1 Manuscript size box, (.25 Shelf feet)

Sea captain from Bath, Maine.

Vessel papers of Captain J. W. Thomson shipmaster of the *J. A. Thomson* (Ship) and the *North Star* (Ship). Vessel papers include correspondence, account summary, invoices, receipts, crew wages, crew lists, articles of agreement, protest, consul document, freight and cargo, bill of health and clearances. The collection is categorically arranged by the vessels *J. A. Thomson* (Ship) and *North Star* (Ship).

Gift from the Melvin B. Henderson Trust, 2000.

MS-335. Accession No. 2000.32.1

Related material at repository, MS-117.

Finding aid available in repository; folder level control.

Added entries—persons:

Gammons, Abner S., *Captain*

Owen, Charles, *Captain*

Thomson, Josiah Wesley, *Captain*

Thompson, Josiah Wesley, *Captain* [Alternate spelling]

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

Genevieve Strickland (Ship)

Hagarstown (Ship)

J. A. Thomson (Ship)

North Star (Ship)

Rosalie (Bark)

Added entries—key terms:

Accounts

Bills of health

Crew lists

Crime

Freight and freightage

Invoices

Letters

Marine protests

Merchant seamen

Receipts

Rescues

Seafaring

Seamanship

Ship Captains

Wages

Acquisition

The Captain J. W. Thomson papers were donated to the Maine Maritime Museum by the Melvin B. Henderson Trust on July 3, 2000.

Provenance

The Captain J. W. Thomson papers came from the estate of the late Melvin B. Henderson. The trustee of the Henderson estate, Wilbur F. Higgins, Jr., handled the donation of the Thomson papers to the Maine Maritime Museum. It is unknown how Melvin B. Henderson, a former antiques dealer in Bath, and former trustee of Maine Maritime Museum, acquired the Captain J. W. Thomson papers. Henderson had a painting of the *North Star* (Ship) and may have collected the papers about this time.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the use of these materials for study or research.

Physical Condition

Most of the papers have fold lines. They were flattened with a tacking iron at low to medium heat. Some manuscripts are acidic, discolored or stained. Others have some surface dirt. A consul document is adhered to a large articles of agreement paper. Another consul document is adhered to a large crew list. These papers were all left intact so as not to causes further damage. The article of agreement has tears on edges and fold lines as well as the aforementioned crew list. A number of fragile documents were sleeved in Melinex or archival Mylar. Acid free/lignin free paper was placed between documents to preserve writing and for additional support in sleeves

Processing Notes

The collection is grouped into two series: I. *J. A. Thomson* (Ship) and II. *North Star* (Ship) and follow the standard sequence for vessel papers. Correspondence for the ship *J. A. Thomson* is identified as incoming for Capt. J. W. Thomson. Letters which are not written to Capt. Thomson are placed in a second folder labeled 'Correspondence—other.'

There are a small number of invoices, receipts, and consular papers which have been organized chronologically by voyage.

Mixed in the collection was a letter written in 1961 by Mark W. Hennessey to Mel (Melvin B. Henderson, donor) concerning the *North Star* (Ship). This correspondence was not part of the original collection and hence was placed in supporting document materials.

Biographical Notes

Captain Josiah W. Thomson.

Captain J. W. Thomson was born on July, 19, 1839 to Joseph Thomson (b. 1801) and Frances Sloman (b. abt. 1805). The family lived in Woolwich, Maine and then later Bowdoinham, Maine. Captain Thomson married Caroline B. Owen (b. abt. 1846-47) on December 25, 1872. They resided in Bath, Maine. The California Voter Registers record Captain Thomson's residence as San Francisco in 1886, 1888, and 1890. He was a seaman, mariner and eventually a sea captain.¹ Captain Thomson was prominent shipmaster out of the Bath port.² He sailed on the *J. A. Thomson* (Ship) and *North Star* (Ship) as shipmaster. His two older brothers, Joseph Albert (b.1831-d.1919) and George (b.1834-d.1882) were both shipmasters.^{1,5}

Captain Thomson sailed from New Orleans to Russia to New Orleans on the *J. A. Thomson* (Ship) in 1872. He also voyaged to Bristol on the same vessel. He sailed to Cardiff, Hong Kong, Antwerp, Rio de Janeiro, Canary Islands, Liverpool, San Francisco and New Orleans on the *North Star* (Ship).

Captain Thomson's wife, Caroline, was the daughter of Charles Owen (b. abt. 1809) a sea captain from Bath, Maine. He was shipmaster and an assistant mate for the *North Star* (Ship).³ The brother of Caroline, Silas Owen, sailed as "Boy" in 1875 and 1877 for Captain Thomson on the ship the *North Star*. In 1878, he was a third mate on the same vessel for Capt. Thomson.⁴

Captain Thomson died in San Francisco in March 1891.² Caroline died on December 2, 1892. She is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Bath.¹

References

1. <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com>, <http://search.ancestry.com>
2. Bath Daily Times. 27 March 1891.
3. MS-355. Folder 7.
4. MS-335. Folders 8, 9.
5. Ancestry.com

Scope and Content Notes

This is a small collection of vessel papers for Captain J. W. Thomson from 1872-1879. The vessels papers pertain to the *J. A. Thomson* (Ship) and the *North Star* (Ship) with Captain Josiah W. Thomson as shipmaster. The ship *J. A. Thomson* may have been named after his brother Joseph Albert. Papers are correspondence (incoming, business related), account summary, invoices, receipts, crew wages, crew lists, articles of agreement, freight and cargo, bill of health, clearance documents, consul document and a protest. The collection records voyages, crewmen, wages, merchant accounts, ports, repairs, crime, awards, rescues, desertion, demurrage and cargo among other maritime history.

The *North Star* (Ship) correspondence is of some particular interest. There is a letter from the Consulate of the United States in Hong Kong to Captain Thomson when in charge of the *North Star* (Ship) regarding an assault on Seaman Gustof Wiland of cruel and unusual treatment by other crewmen in 1878 (folder 4). The names of these crewmen are difficult to decipher in this letter. Their names are not listed on any other *North Star* (Ship) vessel papers. Gustof Wiland is listed in the 1878 crew list as a seaman for the ship *North Star* (folder 10). There is a

letter to the Collector of Customs at Bath from Hamilton Smith of the State Department announcing that a gold medal is to be awarded to Captain Thomson, a silver medal to the boatswain and £12 sterling to be divided between the four seamen of the *North Star* (Ship) who rescued the crew of the Swedish vessel the *Rosalie* (Bark) on February 5, 1873 (folder 4).

There is a receipt of wages paid to J. E. Lerman as assistant mate aboard the ship *North Star*.³ Silas Owen is listed as “Boy” in the articles of agreement in 1875 and crew list in 1877 for the *North Star* (Ship) (folder 10). In the 1878 crew list, Silas Owen is listed as third mate on the *North Star* with Captain Thomson as master (folder 8). This is the brother of Mrs. Caroline Thomson and the brother-in-law to Captain Thomson.

An 1874 consul document attached to the 1873 crew list records the seamen on the *North Star* (Ship) all deserted at port without receiving wages from Captain Thomson with the exception of William Lawrence, N. J. Elfrin and William Kasson (folder 10). The vessel voyaged from Bath to Liverpool with a crew of 22 including the captain (folder 10).

Lastly, what seems to be a copy of a protest for the *North Star* guano charter on January 19, 1876 for being detained and delayed over and above lay days provided in the charter creating overcharges (folder 13).

Description of Collection

Series I. *J. A. Thomson* (Ship) 1872. This includes invoices, crew wages and a consul document. Crew wages depict voyages from New Orleans to Russia to New Orleans in 1872. The consular document orders Captain Thomson to send and release a seaman to prison in 1872.

Series II. *North Star* (Ship) 1872-79. This includes incoming correspondence, invoices, receipts, consular papers, crew accounts and wages. A protest for detained and delayed over and above lay days creating overcharges is also included.

MS-335 Captain J. W. Thomson Papers
Finding Aid

Box # Folder #

Series I. *J. A. Thomson (Ship) (1872-1879)*

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| | | Accounts, general |
| 1 | 1 | Consul Certificate of delivery of ship's register, Reval (EST) June 1872 |
| | 2 | Bristol, ENG Aug.—Sept. 1872 |
| | 3 | Accounts, crew wages, November 1872, U. S. Shipping Commissioner,
New Orleans |

Series II. *North Star (Ship)*

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|----|--|
| 4 | Correspondence-incoming, Capt. J. W. Thomson, 1871-79 |
| 5 | Correspondence, other, 1873, 1875 |
| 6 | Accounts, summary—Captain J. W. Thomson, 1877 |
| 7 | Accounts, general |
| | New Orleans, Nov. 1872 |
| | San Francisco, Nov. 1873 |
| | Rio de Janiero, Sept. 1874 |
| | Pabellon de Pica, CHL, July 1876 |
| | Las Palmas, Canary Islands, June 1877 |
| | Hong Kong, Feb. 1878 |
| | Rio de Janiero, July 1878 |
| | San Francisco, Aug.—Nov. 1878 |
| 8 | Accounts, Freight and cargo, 1877, 1879 |
| | Accounts—Crew |
| 9 | Articles of Agreement, 1875 |
| 10 | Lists, 1873, 1878 |
| 11 | Hospital money returns, 1875-78 |
| 12 | Wages, 1877 |
| 13 | Protest, Guano charter, overcharges, January 1876 (copy) |